

Facebook on a Statewide Level

With more than 35,000 fans, the Kentucky State Police Facebook page has proven its success as a way of communicating with individuals in communities spanning the commonwealth.

KSP's Facebook page is chock full of press releases, notes with tips for keeping citizens safe, recruiting mechanisms, event information and pictures, polls and user-generated discussions that span the gamut of topics and participants.

Numerous other state law enforcement-related agencies also have active Facebook pages, including the Department of Criminal Justice Training, The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and Kentucky Department of Corrections. ■



>> Trigg County is not alone in using Facebook in this way. Agencies across the commonwealth have discovered the immense resource their communities members can be through Facebook. Bardstown Police Department Chief Rick McCubbin began the agency's Facebook page right after his appointment in April. McCubbin and his staff post images of Bardstown and Nelson County's most wanted individuals.

"If you're wanted on a warrant, you're going on the Facebook page," McCubbin said. "Bardstown has about 13,000 people, so we're small enough that when we put pictures up there, there is a good chance someone's going to know them."

Between June 1 and August 31, Bardstown police served 82 arrest warrants, of which McCubbin said about 25 percent were found using tips from Facebook.

"People don't ever want to be the snitch, but if you give them an avenue to snitch, they are going to do it," McCubbin said.

Law enforcement agencies' Facebook fans offer them a wider scope of individuals paying attention to what's going on in the city or county.

"It's everyday around here," said Franklin County Sheriff Pat Melton. "It's crazy,

but that two-way interaction with the community is why we are being successful. Because if you rely on the 20 sets of eyes of the sheriff's office, that isn't a whole lot. But, when you increase those eyes by several thousand, look what we can do together. A police [officer] or deputy sheriff can't be everywhere all the time, but nosey neighbors are a good thing."

Melton and the Franklin County Sheriff's Office should know. The agency created their Facebook page shortly after Melton took office in January. In May, Melton decided to create a Franklin County's Most Wanted design for posting them on Facebook. Between May 25 and August 26 — roughly 90 days — they caught 32 people using tips from Facebook, along with their cable channel 27.

"We were laughed at a lot for [it] at first," Franklin County Chief Deputy Ron Wyatt said. "We got a lot of kidding over [Facebook] until people started getting locked up. Then we've had a lot of other agencies asking us to put people up there."

Franklin County had one individual they didn't have any information on, but once his image was posted on Facebook, within eight minutes he was in custody, Wyatt said.



▲ In January, the Jackson Police Department posted numerous un-served warrants on its Facebook page, within one hour they had arrested their first individual. The Jackson Police Department's page has about 2,200 fans, with a town population of only 2,500.